

Why People Go to Mediums: Motivations and Embodied Experience among Clients of the Three-Legged Stool Practice in Hungary

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This article examines contemporary mediumship in Hungary through ethnographic research among practitioners of a three-legged stool technique and their clients. Drawing on interviews, participant observation and analysis of séance practices, the study explores why people seek contact with the dead and how these encounters generate experiential certainty, address crises and produce new forms of meaning. By situating the Hungarian material within broader European and global contexts, the article shows how individualised, experience-centred mediumship operates within today's spiritual and consumer landscapes.

KEYWORDS: mediumship, Hungary, contemporary spirituality, afterlife, embodied experience, commodification of spirituality, object-mediated writing

Prispevek obravnava sodobno medijstvo na Madžarskem na podlagi etnografske raziskave med izvajalci tehnike trinožnega stolčka in njihovimi klienti. Na osnovi intervjujev, opazovanja z udeležbo in analize seans preučuje razloge za iskanje stika z mrtvimi ter načine, kako tovrstne izkušnje vzpostavljajo občutek gotovosti, pomagajo pri soočanju z življenjskimi krizami in prispevajo k oblikovanju novih pomenov. Z umestitvijo madžarskega gradiva v širši evropski in globalni kontekst članek pokaže, kako individualizirane oblike medijstva, osredinjene na osebno izkušnjo, delujejo v sodobnem duhovnem in potrošniškem okolju.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: medijstvo, Madžarska, sodobna duhovnost, posmrtno življenje, utelešena izkušnja, komodifikacija duhovnosti, pisanje s pomočjo predmetov

INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CONTEXT

Practices of communicating with the dead are present in a wide range of contemporary alternative spiritual contexts, including various forms of mediumship that emphasise personal experience and interaction with deceased persons (Steffen, 2013; Kalvig, 2016). In Hungary, practices of communicating with the dead have important historical antecedents. Classical ethnographic descriptions of Hungarian seers, as well as interpretations of the figure of the seer in a broader European context, had become relatively well established by the second half of the twentieth century (Pócs, 1990; 2002). The history of Hungarian spiritualism likewise points to earlier transnational influences and mediumistic traditions (Oppenheim, 1985; Gutierrez, 2015; Benedek, 2024). By contrast, contemporary forms of seeing the dead and mediumistic practice – particularly those embedded in individualised settings and within the broader milieu of contemporary spirituality – have not yet been

the subject of comprehensive empirical research in Hungary. In Hungarian scholarship, these phenomena tend to appear only in marginal remarks, and systematic ethnographic or anthropological accounts remain lacking.

International scholarship has repeatedly noted similar gaps: research on contemporary mediumship and practices of communicating with the dead is often fragmented, case-based and overshadowed by historical or doctrinal approaches. At the same time, recent decades have seen the publication of several in-depth, monograph-length studies with an anthropological focus (Steffen, 2011; 2013; 2016; Kalvig, 2016; Tomlinson, 2024). The present study seeks to engage with these international efforts by offering an ethnographic analysis of contemporary mediumistic practice in Hungary.

Contemporary mediumistic practice in Hungary encompasses a range of techniques and forms of mediation, including clairvoyance, trance communication, platform mediumship and different variants of automatic or object-mediated writing. Rather than attempting a comprehensive overview, this article focuses on one specific and little-documented technique, the so-called three-legged stool method. This case is selected for its distinct material form of mediation, its emphasis on interaction and participation, and its circulation among a small number of contemporary practitioners, some of whom were originally introduced to the technique by Antal Bujka (Bujka, Hegedűs, 2000). By concentrating on this particular technique, the study aims to provide a detailed ethnographic account that can also contribute to broader discussions of contemporary mediumship.

The article draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted among practitioners of the three-legged stool technique and their clients in Hungary. Its primary aim is to examine the contexts and motivations that lead people to consult mediums, as well as the experiential and relational dimensions of these encounters. Particular attention is given to how mediumistic communication produces forms of experiential certainty, addresses situations of crisis, and sustains ongoing relationships between the living and the dead.

The article proceeds by first introducing Antal Bujka and his association with the three-legged stool technique, followed by an outline of the methodological approach and fieldwork context. It then presents the technique in greater detail and situates it within its broader historical and comparative context. The subsequent sections analyse the motivations and situations in which clients turn to mediums, before turning to the sensory and embodied dimensions of the encounter. Finally, the article situates these practices within the wider context of contemporary spirituality and experience-oriented forms of consumption.

ANTAL BUJKA AND YMOLA

In 2000, a small book titled *Ymola* was published in Hungary. Its subtitle, *The True Stories of a Medium*, presents the account of how Antal Bujka became a medium (in 1993), as well as the events of the following seven years, including anonymised cases involving his clients.¹ Antal Bujka, who came from a family of musicians in Újpest and

¹ The book was compiled with the assistance of Piroska Hegedűs, who also wrote the preface (Bujka, Hegedűs, 2000).

later pursued a career in commerce after leaving the field of music, was one of Budapest's well-known mediums for more than thirty years, until his death in 2023.² On 14 December 1993, Bujka encountered a middle-aged woman from Romania named Ymola – hence the book's title – from whom he received the intermediary object, a small “mediumistic stool”. According to the book, the transmission of this knowledge occurred through an unexpected turn of events. While selling goods at a market, Bujka helped Ymola and her companion by offering them space to sell their merchandise. By the evening, they had sold almost all their goods. In return for this good deed, Ymola invited Bujka to their home, where she told him that he was a chosen person endowed with exceptionally strong spiritual energies. Bujka, curious but initially sceptical, was eventually persuaded to try the stool. In order to convince him, they attempted to summon Bujka's deceased father through it. The conversation with his late father had a profound impact on him, and he accepted the stool. By the next day, however, Ymola had disappeared. In worldly, earthly reality they never met again, yet over time – through the stool – Bujka was able to consult with her as a spiritual guide.

The book also includes stories illustrating the kinds of issues clients brought to Bujka in the 1990s and the forms of communication that unfolded through the three-legged stool. These narratives – many of which remain common today – range from messages of reassurance from the dead, to healing attempts, expressions of guilt over neglected graves, assistance in locating lost objects, references to rebirth or past lives, and warnings about impending dangers. Each story is followed by brief comments from the medium, and the book concludes with a diagram outlining the soul's journey after death. Today, *Ymola* can only be obtained from antiquarian bookshops, often at relatively high prices. During my research on mediumship in Hungary, ongoing since 2024, several mediums have referred to the book, including practitioners who work with different techniques and who did not personally know Bujka. Moreover, some mediums still practicing today were originally initiated into mediumship by Bujka himself. Over the course of his thirty-year career, he selected several individuals from among his clients to whom he transmitted his knowledge, usually through courses he organised and conducted either individually or in very small groups.

RESEARCH METHODS AND FIELDWORK

Over the past two years of ethnographic fieldwork, I became acquainted with four mediums who continue to practice mediumship and were originally initiated by Bujka. Although all of them learned from him, they have no personal relationships with one another; at most, they became aware online that others also continue to practice the Bujka technique, or they occasionally hear about one another's activities through clients who go from

² Biographical information is drawn from Balla, 2009. From the early 2000s onward, Antal Bujka appeared repeatedly in the popular media and also led séances on television programmes, including sessions involving well-known public figures and the invocation of the spirit of the Hungarian celebrity singer Jimmy Zámbó. For further examples, see his YouTube channel launched in 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/@lelekpillanatok695>.

one specialist to another. Among these four “students”, there is even one who does not consider themselves a true disciple, despite having received their first stool from Bujka.

Among the four mediums, three practice mediumship as their primary occupation, while one uses the knowledge acquired from Bujka only for personal purposes and does not pursue it professionally. One of the four is male and three are female, all of them in their forties. One lives and practices in Budapest, another in a smaller town near the capital, one lives abroad in Italy, and the fourth in a small town in the Hungarian-inhabited regions of Slovakia.

Beyond the specialists, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with thirty interlocutors who had tried this particular form of mediation at least once, and in some cases multiple times. I reached interlocutors primarily through online platforms, via calls posted on social media and through direct outreach. I was most successful in approaching those who had publicly shared accounts of their séance experiences on social media. Most of the interviews were conducted online, while a smaller number took place in person. This was partly due to the absence of geographical constraints in the research and partly because even interlocutors living nearby generally preferred to meet online, at least for the first encounter.

The interlocutors came from different regions of Hungary, as well as from Hungarian communities beyond its borders and, in a few cases, from further abroad. Their places of residence included the capital, small towns and villages. The sample displayed considerable diversity in terms of age, educational background and religious–spiritual self-identification. Most interlocutors were between thirty and sixty years old and had secondary education or less, although several had completed higher education. Religious orientations ranged from affiliation with historical churches to more loosely defined or explicitly “spiritual” self-identifications.

Nearly all interlocutors were women;³ only one man participated in the study, whom I interviewed together with his partner in connection with the loss of their child. The main characteristics of the sample are summarised in Table 1.

Characteristic	Distribution
Region of residence	Hungary (17); Hungarian communities beyond its borders (10); abroad (3)
Type of settlement	Capital city (8); small towns (12); villages (7); large cities abroad (3)
Education	Higher education (7); secondary school or less (23)
Age group	20s (1); 30s (7); 40s (11); 50s (9); 60s (2)
Religious–spiritual identification	Catholic (5); Protestant (3); loosely affiliated with historical churches/spiritual (9); spiritual (13)
Gender	Women (29); men (1)

Table 1: Overview of the interlocutors (N = 30)

³ The strong female predominance among participants has been widely noted in studies of alternative spirituality (Heelas, Woodhead, 2005: 97–106); for observations specifically concerning mediumship, see, for example, Kalvig, 2016 and Steffen, 2011, 2013, 2016.

As part of the research, I also observed mediumship-related groups on social media and followed clients' discussions within these spaces; however, the present article is based primarily on the interview corpus. To ensure anonymity, all interlocutors were assigned pseudonyms, and smaller settlements are not identified by name. In addition to the interviews, I participated in two séances in 2025 with two different mediums in order to gain first-hand experience of the practice.

THE THREE-LEGGED STOOL TECHNIQUE IN CONTEXT

How does this technique work in practice? Based on my own experience and interview accounts, the process can be summarised as follows. The three-legged stool resembles a small wooden seat; however, its third leg is in fact a small pencil. A large sheet of white paper (approximately A2 size) is fixed to a table. The medium then invokes, or calls upon, the soul with whom the clients wish to communicate. For this type of séance, it is considered important that at least two clients be present – people who knew the deceased well – because this is believed to generate stronger energy. In exceptional cases, attendance alone is possible, mainly for those already experienced with séances and regarded as possessing a higher “vibrational level”. According to participants' understandings, the dead use the energies of the living in order to convey their messages. After contact has been established, the séance begins with a series of identification questions, usually led by the medium, who acts as the primary questioner in this initial phase. If the summoned soul is strong enough, the three-legged stool begins to move, writing or drawing on the sheet of white paper, through which it is able to communicate with the relatives. If the soul is weaker, it is asked to respond only to yes–no questions by circling the appropriate answer or by giving other simple signals. Gradually, and with the encouragement of the medium, the clients also begin to participate in asking identification questions. The medium urges them to ask questions whose answers could not possibly be known by anyone other than themselves and the summoned soul. Once the identification phase is complete and the participants are fully convinced that they are indeed communicating with the intended soul, the actual conversation can begin. At this stage, the clients take on the main role, while the medium steps somewhat into the background, assisting primarily by helping to simplify or reformulate questions if they are too complex, and by facilitating the overall interaction. Even with the medium's guidance, the emphasis at this stage lies on the direct communication between the clients and the soul (or souls) of the deceased. At the end of the séance, the farewell is again led by the medium in order to close the connection safely. After the session, the family members may take the sheet of paper home with them.

The technique described above does not appear in contemporary anthropological and ethnographic literature on mediumship in Western European and Anglo-American contexts, although this absence may reflect gaps in documentation rather than the absence of comparable practices. While the book *Ymola* provides only a brief remark on the origin of the stool – stating merely that it is “ancient” – the small, three-legged, stool-like

writing device described above is not historically unfamiliar. Rather, it bears a structural resemblance to object-mediated writing techniques associated with nineteenth-century Spiritualism (Oppenheim, 1985; Gutierrez, 2015; etc.). The *planchette*, which appeared in Spiritualist circles in France in the mid-nineteenth century, was a small instrument typically shaped like a drop or a heart, equipped with two small wheels and a writing pencil functioning as a third “leg”. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the planchette became a mass-produced séance device – particularly in the United States – and eventually emerged as one of the iconic techniques of British and American physical Spiritualism.⁴ Planchettes and related writing devices gained popularity relatively quickly in Central Europe, including Hungary, during the nineteenth century.⁵ By the turn of the twentieth century, forms of spirit communication mediated through writing mediums without the use of such instruments had also become increasingly prominent. Their growing significance was closely associated with the emergence of Hungarian evangelical Spiritualism, which largely followed the French Kardecist tradition and placed particular emphasis on inspirational and automatic writing produced directly through the medium.

Kardecist evangelical Spiritualism embedded mediumistic communication within a religious–moral framework and placed the emphasis not on physical proof but on spiritual teaching, moral development and the personal suitability of the medium. By contrast, in British and American physical Spiritualism, spectacular and materially traceable phenomena connected to objects – including the production of writing through a device – became primary means of credibility and proof. In Hungarian practice, therefore, the writing medium did not appear as a backgrounded intermediary, but rather as a morally responsible person whose body and hand remained the central site of communication. The best-known writing mediums of the region – such as Adelma Vay or the mediums associated with the circle of Adolf Grünhut – did not use material mediating devices. Through automatic writing, they conveyed revelations via their own hands, while emphasising that the act did not arise from conscious intention but from spiritual guidance (Grünhut, 1921; Benedek, 2024: 130–140). Within this interpretive framework, writing was understood not as a technical trick or form of proof, but as a manifestation of the medium’s bodily–spiritual condition and moral credibility.

The differences between physical–experimental and evangelical Spiritualism were reflected not only in differing techniques and logics of credibility, but also in the social forms of mediumship. British and American physical Spiritualism was closely associated with public mediumistic performances, in which spectacular phenomena and demonstrations intended as proof unfolded before an audience. By contrast, the evangelical Spiritualism

⁴ See a contemporary depiction of one of the most famous Boston Planchettes: [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:5345808\\$103i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:5345808$103i).

⁵ Contemporary newspaper and periodical literature provides abundant evidence of the dissemination and popularity of planchettes and related writing devices in Hungary. In a retrospective account published in *Fővárosi Lapok* in December 1889, Baron Kálmán Jósika recalled the spiritualist milieu of approximately thirty five years earlier: “It is about thirty-five years since cabinetmakers in Hungary, and especially in Transylvania, were kept busy by orders for small tables that could be moved with one hand. There was hardly a modern household without such a little three-legged table and, among the members of the family, a medium suited to it” (author’s translation) (*Fővárosi Lapok*, 27 December 1889).

linked to the Kardecist tradition in Hungary was less conducive to such public appearances: mediumistic communication was interpreted primarily within a closed moral–religious framework, which contributed to the fact that mediums who performed in public were present in much smaller numbers in nineteenth-century Hungary.

A further difference concerns organisational forms. Although, by the end of the nineteenth century, Hungarian Spiritualists – similarly to those in several Western European countries – also operated in associations, these gradually became unviable over the course of the twentieth century, especially as a result of the political and ideological transformations following the Second World War, and eventually almost entirely disappeared. The period after the political transition did not bring any substantial revival either: Spiritualist communal forms still exist, but they have not been able to reorganise in any meaningful way (Benedek, 2024). As a result of these historical processes, contemporary mediumistic practice in Hungary takes place not in associative or communal forms, but predominantly within individualised practices.

In this respect, the situation of contemporary Hungarian mediums shows both differences from and similarities with Western European and Anglo-Saxon contexts. The most significant difference lies in the absence of an organisational background: in Hungary there are no “church-like” mediumistic congregations of the kind widespread in Western Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world, where such groups may also operate as officially registered religious communities. Such communities have recently been studied anthropologically by Anne Kalvig in Norway (2016), Vibeke Steffen in Denmark (2011; 2013; 2016), and Matt Tomlinson in Australia (2024). In these contexts, mediumistic practice is often connected to communal rituals, regular gatherings and institutional frameworks.

Contemporary Hungarian mediums typically work in individual practice. Although some also give public performances (“platform mediumship”), even before audiences of several hundred people, this form is better regarded as exceptional. Such public appearances resemble the practice of well-known American mediums such as Theresa Caputo or Tyler Henry (cf. Darghawth, 2013; White, 2019). Alongside touring mediums who hold large public events, however, the contemporary Hungarian field is characterised much more strongly by personal consultations involving two or three participants, which provide a more intimate, experience-centred framework for establishing contact with the dead – as in the case of the mediums working with the Antal Bujka technique that stands at the centre of this study.

Despite these differing organisational, institutional and technical forms – and despite the fact that comparable object-mediated writing techniques do not appear in contemporary Western European and Anglo-Saxon ethnographic research – the motivations of clients, the aims of establishing contact, and the content of the messages conveyed show significant similarities with Western European and Anglo-Saxon mediumistic practices. For this reason, Western European and Anglo-Saxon scholarship has provided an important point of departure for my analysis. At the same time, the Hungarian material demonstrates how contemporary mediumistic practices operating without institutional backing and in predominantly individualised forms may nevertheless be understood as part of the broader field of globalised spiritual phenomena.

CONTEXTS AND MOTIVATIONS

In this article, I focus on the contexts, life situations and motivations that lead people in contemporary Hungary to consult mediums. A close reading of the interviews reveals a range of underlying motivations. While diverse, these form several recurring patterns. The categories outlined below are not mutually exclusive and often overlap in practice. Moreover, they operate at different analytical levels: some reflect emic motivations articulated by participants, while others refer to experiential dimensions of the encounter or to broader analytical interpretations. The categories are therefore not meant as fixed or mutually exclusive, but as a way of highlighting recurring patterns in the material.

Based on the interviews and field experiences, the following recurring motivations and contexts can be identified: (1) communication with the dead, including the desire to confirm the existence of the afterlife and gain certainty about it; (2) the resolution of crises related to death, including unanswered questions and unresolved family conflicts; (3) seeking advice in relation to the everyday crises of the living, often connected to life management and decision-making; and (4) situations in which the deceased themselves are understood to be in crisis. In addition to these motivations, participants also emphasise the therapeutic and sensory qualities of the encounter itself (5), while the practice can further be interpreted within the experience-oriented logic of contemporary consumer culture (6).

1. Seeking Certainty about the Afterlife and Communication with the Dead

Based on the interviews, one of the most important motivations of clients is the desire to gain certainty about the existence of the afterlife and the possibility of communicating with the dead. This desire does not appear simply as a matter of belief, but rather as a search for existential certainty made accessible through personal experience. Turning to a medium often does not stem from a previously stable spiritual conviction; on the contrary, it frequently arises from questions, doubts and ambivalence. All of my interlocutors reported experiences that they attributed to the presence of a deceased relative. These experiences took different forms, including dreams as well as various sensory signs: moving objects, encounters with animals (for example butterflies or household pets), distinctive smells, light phenomena or unexplained bodily sensations. One of the main reasons for consulting a medium was to confirm the meaning of these experiences – to determine whether the signs perceived by clients truly originated from the deceased or might instead be related to grief, longing or coincidence.

In the case of the three-legged stool technique, writing itself constitutes a particularly important material form of certainty. The sheets of paper produced during the séance often function as keepsakes: participants preserve them and revisit them from time to time, showing them to relatives and friends, recounting which questions were asked and how the summoned deceased responded, and retelling the events of the séance. Moreover, several interlocutors reported that the handwriting produced through the small stool sometimes resembled that of the deceased, which further reinforced for them both the authenticity of the experience and the depth of the connection and communication. Among my interlocutors, there is even an example of a client who later had a fragment of

an answer written by her deceased mother during the séance tattooed on her body. In this sense, writing does not merely convey information; it becomes a lasting trace – material evidence invested with bodily and emotional significance.

Several interlocutors emphasised that they arrived at the séance with a distinctly sceptical attitude and did not believe that communication with the dead was possible. This observation corresponds closely with Matt Tomlinson’s analyses of mediumistic communities in Australia. According to Tomlinson, doctrinal belief is rarely the primary element in mediumistic practice; rather, personal bodily and sensory experiences play a decisive role, often overriding previously held worldview positions (Tomlinson, 2024: 21). In this sense, the séance does not function as confirmation of an already existing belief but rather as an event that produces certainty, in which experience precedes and shapes belief. In her research in Denmark, Vibeke Steffen similarly argues that clients seek this kind of certainty because the interpretive frameworks offered by mediums provide reassurance for those who feel uncertain due to their own sensitivities or recurring experiences. Through a spiritual explanation, they are finally able to attribute coherent meaning to these experiences (Steffen, 2016).

The interviews also suggest that the desire to gain certainty about the existence of the afterlife is not limited to clients who do not practice religion. Interlocutors who regularly practised Christianity emphasised that, although the idea of eternal life had always been present in their faith, they still felt the need for “something more” than belief itself: a certainty grounded in personal experience.

Edina (45) and Gáspár (53), a deeply Catholic couple from Budapest who lost their young son, expressed this by saying that although they had always believed in the afterlife, “*we were looking for conviction beyond faith ... for certainty*” (Interlocutor EI043, female, 1980; Interlocutor EI044, male, 1972, 16.6.2025). For many participants, the mediumistic experience thus functions as a sensory complement to faith, transforming doctrinal teachings into personally grounded certainty. In this sense, consulting a medium becomes not merely a search for information about the dead, but a way of producing experiential certainty about the afterlife.

2. Resolving Unanswered Questions and Family Conflicts: Death as Crisis

The certainty experienced during the séance – the perception of signs and their validation – often provides reassuring answers to a fundamental question: whether the deceased relative is “well” and “in a good place”. The event of death usually generates a complex crisis, raising many additional questions that often remain unresolved: why this person, why at that particular moment, why under those circumstances, and how one can continue living after such a loss. In many cases, these questions are accompanied by a sense of unfinished business between the living and the dead. Based on my ethnographic fieldwork, the desire to consult a medium appears particularly often after sudden, unexpected or traumatic deaths, such as the loss of young children, suicide, accidents, incurable illness or deaths occurring under unclear circumstances. This category also includes situations in which the circumstances of death remain uncertain – for example in cases of disappearance, suspected homicide or suspected medical negligence.

The interviews also indicate that even a natural death in old age can trigger a profound crisis, particularly when the farewell remained incomplete or when relatives experience strong feelings of guilt. Many interlocutors described situations in which they were unable to be present at the moment of death, or felt that they had failed to do something that can no longer be done. Clients therefore seek not only comfort but also some form of reassuring explanation: an interpretive framework within which missed or incomplete final encounters, or a death that appears senseless, can acquire meaning.

One characteristic form of such explanations is what Susan E. Kwilecki describes as a “soul contract theodicy” (Kwilecki, 2014), a concept she developed in her analysis of the narratives of parents who have lost children. According to this understanding, souls agree before birth – within an intermediate state of existence – to undertake future suffering, including even an early death, for the sake of spiritual development. Within this interpretive framework, the death of a child is not understood as an accident or injustice but as a learning opportunity that may serve the spiritual development of the parents, the balancing of the child’s karma, or the fulfilment of an unfinished spiritual “task”.

In my own fieldwork, parents who had lost a child constituted approximately 16% of my interlocutors (five interlocutors). In these cases, narratives that placed the loss within a karmic or transcendent order appeared particularly frequently – for example through interpretations such as “this is teaching us something”, “this was all that was written for him in this life”, or “he had to move on”. At the same time, the analysis of the material also suggests that the soul contract theodicy does not operate exclusively in interpretations of child death but also appears as an explanatory principle in other forms of death that are difficult to accept. In such cases, the specific content of the explanations may differ, but the underlying logic remains the same: death is interpreted not as an arbitrary event but as part of a spiritual path agreed upon in advance.

From this perspective, Kwilecki’s theory – although empirically grounded in the experiences of parents who have lost children – can be extended into a broader interpretive framework for other types of loss. In the cases examined in my research, the karmic explanatory principle fulfils a similar function: it resolves the experience of contingency and injustice, reduces feelings of personal responsibility, and allows death to be understood as part of a larger, meaningful order.

Antónia (43), from Budapest, first turned to a medium in her early twenties during a severe life crisis, after losing her first love to suicide. Following the tragedy, she experienced intense self-blame and a profound personal crisis, which – according to her own account – only the encounter with the medium helped to overcome. As she put it, “*there I received the strength to continue my life*” (Interlocutor EI041, female, 1982, 28.3.2025), along with the reassurance that she had not caused her partner’s death. Later in life, she experienced another loss: her mother died relatively young as a result of medical negligence in a hospital while Antónia was abroad. During the séance, her questions focused primarily on what had happened to her mother and why “this had to happen in this way”. She also asked whether this had been her mother’s final “exit point”. In contemporary alternative spiritual contexts, it is widely understood that a person may have multiple potential “exit points” from physical life; accordingly, a recurring question in séances is

whether a given death represents the final such moment or whether it might have been avoided. The answer she received initially did not bring comfort. It turned out that this had not been the final possible moment for her mother to leave this life. According to the message conveyed during the séance, however, her mother had nevertheless chosen this path because after her death she would be able to support her daughter more effectively. At first, Antónia found this explanation difficult to accept. Over time, however, a series of positive changes and events in her own life gradually convinced her of her mother's continued presence and support (Interlocutor EI041, female, 1982, 28.3.2025).

Antónia's case is not unique. During my fieldwork, this idea appeared repeatedly: that the meaning of death may be explained through the deceased person's role as a spiritual helper. For many participants this interpretation can be comforting, although it does not always lead to resolution. Kati (53), a kindergarten teacher living in a small village in the Dunajská Streda district (okres Dunajská Streda), for example, believed that her father's death might have served to "resolve" a family conflict, yet the tensions ultimately remained unresolved and continued to shape family relations (Interlocutor EI036, female, 1972, 19.3.2025).

I also regularly asked my interlocutors whether they believed in reincarnation or rebirth. Most responses were affirmative; however, it became clear that few held well-developed views on the matter. In several cases, the séance itself was the first occasion on which the possibility of reincarnation had arisen for them – particularly among those more closely affiliated with mainstream churches. Mediumistic conversations often provided not only answers but also interpretive frameworks for imagining the cycle of souls, understanding the meaning of karma, or making sense of statements such as "this had to happen in this way". During séances, questions frequently arise concerning the inevitability of death: whether the moment of death had been the deceased person's "final exit point" from this world, and whether things could have happened differently. When the response is that "this was what had been written" or "this was their karma", many relatives experience this as reassuring, since it alleviates feelings of personal responsibility. The question of reincarnation carries a similar significance: whether the deceased will be reborn, whether they might meet again, or even return to the same family.

These experiences suggest that the crisis brought about by the loss of a relative is one of the most important motivations for consulting a medium. In such cases, the mediumistic encounter typically takes place relatively soon after the death – within a few months or one or two years – and becomes an active part of the grieving process. According to Susan E. Kwilecki, mediumistic experiences enable mourners to reinterpret their worldview: the relationship is not severed but transformed, and death comes to be understood as a spiritual transition (Kwilecki, 2009: 121; 2011). In the international literature, the most common immediate motivations for consulting a medium are grief, the search for continuity in relationships, and the desire for certainty. Relatives do not merely wish to believe; they seek concrete answers to questions such as whether the deceased is "well", whether they "still love them", or whether they have "forgiven them" (Kalvig, 2016: 48–50; White, 2019: 90–91). In this respect, the material I collected among Hungarians closely follows these international patterns. Mediumship thus fulfils a dual function:

it provides emotional support and comfort while also offering an interpretive framework in which death can be understood not as an endpoint but as a transformed continuation of a relationship.

3. Seeking Advice and Guidance: The Living in Situations of Crisis

Once clients experience during mediumistic encounters that their relationship with the deceased does not end permanently but can continue in a new and ongoing form, they very often become regular clients. Most of my interlocutors were able to recount not just a single séance experience but several; those who had attended only once by the time of the interview usually said that they intended to return. In such cases, consulting a medium no longer appears solely as a response to a single crisis – more precisely, to the initial crisis of death – but becomes part of a longer-term strategy for coping with and navigating life. Vibeke Steffen's fieldwork in Denmark similarly shows that most mediumistic consultations are not linked to acute crises but rather address everyday uncertainties, decision-making dilemmas, and enduring life problems (Steffen, 2013: 192–194). To describe this phenomenon, Steffen introduces the concept of “deferred closure”, suggesting that séances often do not offer a final resolution but instead enable an ongoing, processual form of coping (Steffen, 2013: 200). In this sense, spiritual counselling does not close the relationship with the deceased but helps sustain it over time, while the continuing bond with the dead becomes a source of emotional security and guidance in decision-making.

The accounts of my interlocutors closely follow this pattern. Although many of them emphasise that they do not arrive with clearly formulated questions, specific concerns often emerge in the course of the séance itself, as the encounter develops into an ongoing conversation. As several interlocutors noted, “there will always be new questions”. Communication does not come to an end, and sharing doubts and uncertainties with the deceased is experienced as meaningful. In these encounters, the deceased are addressed as knowledgeable and supportive advisors. Mediums themselves encourage this approach, urging participants to ask questions freely because the deceased “know everything”. As a result, clients often seek guidance not only on matters related to grief but also on issues such as health, workplace problems or personal crises. The interviews included examples of consultations before divorce or before changing jobs, and requests for health-related advice were also common. Zsófi (34), a nurse living in a small Hungarian town in Slovakia, for example, once asked her deceased grandmother for what she jokingly called a “*heavenly CT scan*”. Through the mediation of the medium, the grandmother indeed indicated a problematic area, which was later confirmed during a medical examination (Interlocutor EI045, female, 1991, 17.6.2025).

The previously mentioned Antónia similarly reported that she regularly consulted a medium before making important decisions. According to her account, nearly every major step in her life was preceded by such a consultation. This was the case, for example, when she decided to move to Italy with her two-month-old child, leaving behind her previous life and relationships: “*I went to ask whether I was making the right decision, whether I should leave everything behind ... whether I should take this step*” (Interlocutor EI041, female, 1982, 28.3.2025).

The frequency of these return visits varies considerably. Some interlocutors said they would go every week if they could, while others consult a medium only every two, three or four months. In the case of parents who have lost a child, consultations often become a lasting – sometimes experienced as endless – part of the grieving process. Edina and Gáspár, for example, stated that they would never stop; they want to speak again and again with their deceased child (Interlocutor EI043, female, 1980; Interlocutor EI044, male, 1972, 16.6.2025). During my fieldwork, I encountered several cases in which someone had been visiting the same medium regularly for years – without exception, these were mothers who had lost a child. Other clients, however, consciously try to set limits and turn to a medium only when truly important questions arise. Zsófi, for example, believes that it is not appropriate to disturb the dead constantly with trivial matters; in her view, they should be consulted only in moments of crisis or when facing important decisions (Interlocutor EI045, female, 1991, 17.6.2025).

Closely related to requests for advice are questions about the future, which form part of a broader strategy for managing uncertainty. Although mediums often emphasise that the dead cannot be asked to predict the future and can offer only guidance – since people possess free will in earthly life – clients frequently seek answers about what lies ahead. Brigi (33), who lives in a small Hungarian-speaking town in Slovakia, for instance, consulted a medium primarily to ask her deceased grandfather – someone she had always enjoyed talking to about everything – whether she would ever have a child after many years of unsuccessful attempts to conceive (Interlocutor EI037, female, 1992, 20.3.2025). Questions related to pregnancy, childbirth and rebirth are particularly common. In Antónia's case, questions about the future were raised on several occasions during séances with deceased relatives. She especially remembers one session in which she received the exact date of her child's birth from a deceased family member during the séance (Interlocutor EI041, female, 1982, 28.3.2025).

Overall, the practice of seeking advice through mediums cannot be understood simply as a one-time response to crisis. Rather, it constitutes an ongoing process of maintaining relationships and producing meaning, in which the bond with the deceased becomes an active resource for navigating everyday decisions, uncertainties and life transitions.

4. When the Dead are in Crisis

In connection with mediumistic advice and guidance, an important question arises: is this relationship one-directional? Do the deceased merely assist the living in their moments of crisis, or are there also situations in which the living can offer support to the dead? Narratives from contemporary mediumistic practice clearly suggest that crises may affect not only the living but also the dead.

Although the idea of hell has largely receded in modern societies (Tomlinson, 2024: 18), one of the recurring first questions in séances remains – perhaps precisely for this reason – where the deceased “is now”. In the type of séance examined in this study, every mediation begins with the medium distinguishing three basic states and asking the summoned soul where it is currently located: in the light or heaven, in an intermediate (“in-between”) state, or on earth.

The crisis of the dead is most often associated with this intermediate (“in-between”) state. A crisis is said to occur when the soul becomes stuck in this state and cannot – or does not dare to – move forward. According to the accounts of my interlocutors, this condition often becomes apparent only during the séance itself. At the same time, relatives frequently report that even before the séance they had somehow “felt” that something was not right, that the deceased may have been unable to “cross over”. In such cases, mediumistic mediation fulfils not only a diagnostic but also an active role. Within the framework of the séance, the soul is “helped across” into the light, and the success of this transition is often confirmed during a subsequent séance.

In my fieldwork, cases in which the deceased is not “well” on the other side occur less frequently, but they do appear. However, this situation is not interpreted as punishment or damnation; rather, it is most often associated with the condition of the intermediate (“in-between”) state. The narratives emphasise that the deceased’s unsettled state is not framed as the result of any failure or fault on the part of the living. At the same time, it is often understood as being shaped by relational factors, such as unresolved conflicts from earthly life, intense mourning by relatives, or unprocessed emotions surrounding the death. In this sense, the condition is not attributed to blame, but to ongoing emotional and relational ties between the living and the dead. In some cases, the intermediate state is not necessarily described as a dramatic form of wandering. It may also appear as a form of waiting: the deceased is said to remain there, sometimes waiting for loved ones to die as well, so that they may move forward together.

The dead can thus be helped during the séance itself. At the same time, however, the living may also assist the dead in other ways beyond the immediate mediation, particularly when the relationship had been burdened by conflict during earthly life. This dynamic is illustrated by the story of Júlia (47), who lives in a small town near Budapest and, in her forties, moved from being a client to becoming a practicing spiritualist specialist working with the three-legged stool technique. According to her account, she maintains an active and supportive relationship with her deceased mother through the stool. With her father, however – who had been severely abusive toward her during his lifetime – she is able to connect only indirectly, through her mother. She describes her father as existing in an “asleep”, unconscious state within the intermediate (“in-between”) realm, which she interprets as the consequence of his alcoholism and unresolved struggles in life. Júlia understands her own work of mourning and self-reflection – acts of forgiveness, acceptance and the processing of past conflicts – as something that not only brings relief to herself but also helps her father become more conscious in the intermediate state (Interlocutor EI046, female, 1978, 19.6.2025). In this interpretation, the living and the dead are simultaneously “working” on the same relationship so that the conflict does not continue to be transmitted either through karma or across generations.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that, despite such examples, the primary purpose of the signs and messages from the dead is usually not to request help. Rather, as ethnographic studies from Western Europe and Anglo-Saxon literature likewise suggest (see, for example, Badone, 2018: 297–298), their main function is to reassure the bereaved. Most often, the message conveyed by these signs is simply that the deceased is “well”, “present” and still watching over loved ones.

Only rarely does the dead person address a concrete request to the living – such as matters related to the grave, commemorative practices or family decisions. In contemporary narratives, an idyllic image of the afterlife tends to dominate: the deceased are described as living in a loving, joyful and evolving state, free from bodily suffering or illness. Another possible intention of the dead is to guide their relatives toward a medium. When the signs sent by the deceased are not sufficient to maintain the relationship, narratives suggest that the dead often “lead” their relatives to a medium, where indirect signals can finally give way to more direct communication. Edina and Gáspár interpret their own path to a medium in this way: they had never previously heard of the medium they eventually consulted, yet they believe that their deceased little boy gradually guided them toward that encounter so that communication could take place (Interlocutor EI043, female, 1980; Interlocutor EI044, male, 1972, 16.6.2025).

During séances, it is also not uncommon for figures other than the person originally summoned to appear. The deceased may bring along other family members or friends who are said to be “waiting” for the meeting. Since it cannot be known in advance who will “arrive”, repeated séances also carry a certain sense of anticipation. Narratives frequently express the idea that the dead themselves welcome these encounters. They are described as encouraging relatives to return and sometimes even explicitly asking them to come again. The maintenance of the relationship is therefore not only important for the living but also for the dead. Antónia expressed this as follows:

They say that once someone has died, they should remain there – that they should not be called back or disturbed. I think that is the old mentality. In fact, they need this just as much as we do: to feel that not everything has been lost, that nothing is truly gone, that we have simply transformed into certain forms of energy. That's all. (Interlocutor EI041, female, 1982, 28.3.2025)

Overall, the narratives surrounding mediumistic practice suggest that relationships do not automatically end after death, nor do they function solely as tools for managing the crises of the living. In certain cases, the living become active participants in the dead's own processes of coping and purification in the other world. The relationship thus becomes a form of ongoing relational work through which both the living and the dead participate in processes of healing, interpretation and moral repair.

5. Experiencing Presence: Embodiment, Touch and Mediumistic Encounter

According to the accounts of my interlocutors, mediumistic séances are almost without exception described as “incredible”, “wonderful”, “cathartic”, “uplifting” and “comforting” experiences – something that, in their view, everyone should experience at least once in their lifetime. These occasions are often accompanied by intense emotional expressions: crying, laughter, bodily trembling, or prolonged moments of silence. The first encounter in particular often remains fixed in memory as an incomprehensible, “unexplainable miracle”, which later serves as an important reference point. As discussed earlier, the repeated desire to attend further séances is largely connected to the fact that the encounter itself functions as a cathartic experience.

One key element of this experience lies in the sensory dimension of the three-legged stool technique, particularly in the possibility of bodily contact. A characteristic opening moment of the séance occurs when the identified soul “greet” those present. Using the small stool, the soul slowly traces the outline of one relative’s palm while the participant’s other hand rests on the stool throughout the process. This gesture in itself produces a powerful bodily experience, as the person directly senses the slow movement across their palm and the subtle intensity of the touches. Although the movement is mediated by the stool, participants clearly attribute the agency to the deceased: “she/he guides it”, “she/he is touching”.

During the séance – provided that participants consent – other forms of touch may also occur. Helga (49), a mother living in a town in Fejér County, recalled the experience as follows:

Laci [the medium] asked me whether I would like Rebi [my daughter] to touch me. You know, Rebi used to have very dark skin, but when she became ill it turned pale, not as dark as before. I told Laci that yes, I would like that, and he told Rebi to try to lift my hand. And imagine this: from my elbow down my arm started turning pale, as if it were her hand. Laci even said that it was no longer my hand but hers. And then she lifted my hand – my hand rose – and I was crying so much that I could barely see, and she stroked my face. With my own hand. (Interlocutor EI034, female, 1976, 17.3.2025)

Physical contact during the séance is not limited to touch alone. Both on social media and in interviews, several participants reported that through the mediation of the three-legged stool it is even possible to “dance” with the deceased – that is, to move rhythmically together across the paper to music.

These experiences can be interpreted with the help of scholarship in the study of religion and spirituality that places bodily experience and emotional intensity at the centre of analysis. In the technique examined here, this sense of immediacy is further intensified by the tactile dimension of the encounter. According to Thomas Csordas’s theory of embodiment, religious and spiritual experience emerges not primarily as a cognitive conviction but as a form of experience organised through the body (Csordas, 2002). In the séance, belief does not precede experience but follows it: the body “knows” first what interpretation articulates only later. The touch of the dead is therefore not merely a metaphorical expression but a bodily event through which participants experience the continuity of the relationship in their own bodies.

In this sense, the body is not simply a mediating channel but an active participant: it perceives, responds and generates meaning. Csordas’s later discussion of intercorporeality (2008) further refines this perspective by describing experience as a relation between bodies. From this viewpoint, touch is not a one-directional act but a reciprocal bodily event in which the boundary between the living and the dead temporarily becomes permeable. The caress, the lifting of the hand, or the shared movement mediated by the three-legged

stool thus becomes experientially present not as representation but as intercorporeal presence. From this perspective, the mediumistic séance – particularly when mediated through the three-legged stool technique – is not merely a communicative event but a bodily encounter. Through it, the relationship between the living and the dead becomes not only interpretable but also perceptible. Embodied presence and bodily contact therefore play a crucial role in shaping the séance as an experience that participants often describe as cathartic, healing and valuable in its own right.

6. Going to a Medium: The Experience-Oriented Logic of Consumer Society

One consequence of the cathartic and healing experience is that clients often wish to experience it repeatedly. At the same time, an important element in understanding the phenomenon is that participation in a mediumistic séance requires a significant financial investment. Several interlocutors reported in interviews that attending a séance – and sometimes travelling several hundred kilometres to do so – represents a serious financial burden for which they prepare consciously over the course of months. The séance thus appears not only as a spiritual event but also as a service requiring planning, financial sacrifice and the prioritisation of resources. Going to a medium today can therefore be understood as a form of expensive gift. It may be a gift to oneself – an act of self-care – a gift to a family member, or even a gift to the deceased, enabling communication to take place once again. On anniversaries, holidays or birthdays, family members sometimes jointly finance a consultation, and in some cases even organise it as a surprise for one another.

This practice clearly situates the mediumistic experience within the logic of experience-based consumption, where the “gift” does not take material form but is realised as an emotional and spiritual experience. Mediums themselves actively contribute to this process of meaning-making: on their social media platforms they regularly emphasise the spiritually “significant” character of anniversaries and holidays as moments that carry special messages.

The logic of gift-giving also shapes the question of when it is considered appropriate or desirable to consult a medium. In contemporary practice, two closely related issues emerge regarding the timing of such encounters. The first concerns how much time should elapse after a death before the first attempt at contact is considered legitimate or “effective”. The second relates to whether there are particular moments that render communication especially meaningful or intense.

In the mediumistic discourses examined here, it is commonly suggested that a certain waiting period should follow the death. On their online platforms as well as during personal consultations, mediums often recommend waiting at least several months – frequently up to half a year – before attempting the first séance. This period is described as allowing the deceased to complete their “transition”, while also giving the bereaved time to move through the initial stages of mourning. Such recommendations can be interpreted within both spiritual and psychologising frameworks: on the one hand, they emphasise the undisturbed progression of the soul’s journey, and on the other, they frame emotional stabilisation as a prerequisite for meaningful communication.

At the same time, particular dates acquire special significance within mediumistic discourse. Birthdays, name days, All Souls' Day and the anniversary of death are often presented as liminal moments that possess heightened communicative potential. According to mediumistic narratives, these occasions may "open" channels of connection and enable encounters that are especially emotionally intense (cf. White, 2019: 99–106).

This understanding is closely linked to the idea that communication with the other world can be cultivated through practice. In the book *Ymola*, for example, it is suggested that the more frequently contact is attempted, the easier communication becomes, as the deceased gradually "learn the path" toward the living (Bujka, Hegedűs, 2000). In this sense, mediumistic contact is constructed not as a singular and exceptional event but as a repeatable and gradually cultivated practice – an interpretation that further facilitates its incorporation into patterns of regular consumption and experience-oriented seeking.

The framing of the mediumistic encounter as a form of gift can also be situated within broader discussions of spirituality and consumer culture. Much scholarship interprets contemporary alternative spirituality – particularly the New Age milieu – as a "spiritual marketplace" in which individuals select from diverse options according to personal needs (Bowman, 1999; Roof, 2001). Empirical studies show that these networks are often organised through commodified forms such as workshops, therapies, books and events (Heelas et al., 2005; Rose, 2005), with circulation among services functioning as a key organising principle (Redden, 2016). At the same time, scholars emphasise that participation in such practices may also serve processes of identity formation and meaning-making rather than representing mere commodification (Aupers, Houtman, 2006; Heelas, 2008).

In my interviews, when I asked participants how they had discovered the possibility of consulting a medium, most responded that "the internet suggested it". They had not actively searched for such services; rather, the option appeared unexpectedly on their social media feeds. As Renser and Tiidenberg (2024) argue, contemporary spiritual practices are not only commodified but are also actively reproduced through the social and technical affordances of digital platforms. Social media does not merely make spiritual services visible; it also structures their circulation, shaping which practices become desirable while encouraging practitioners to build credibility through emotional and relational labour in online environments.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the contemporary Hungarian practice of consulting mediums through the case of the three-legged stool technique associated with Antal Bujka and his students. It has shown that, despite the highly individualised and weakly institutionalised character of contemporary Hungarian mediumship, the motivations of clients closely resemble those described in Western European and Anglo-American scholarship: mourners seek reassurance, continuity and interpretive frameworks through which death can be made meaningful rather than arbitrary. At the same time, the Hungarian material highlights a less frequently discussed aspect of mediumistic relationships, namely their

reciprocity: communication with the dead is not always oriented solely toward the needs of the living, but may also be understood as assisting the dead in processes of transition, healing and moral repair.

The study also argues that the significance of these séances lies not only in the messages conveyed but in the sensory and embodied form of the encounter itself. In the three-legged stool technique, certainty is produced less through doctrine than through bodily experience, touch, movement and the material trace of writing. Mediumistic communication thus appears not simply as a channel of information but as a relational and experiential practice through which the bond between the living and the dead becomes perceptible.

Finally, the article suggests that contemporary Hungarian mediumship should be understood as part of a broader field of globalised spirituality that is increasingly shaped by digital platforms and the logics of consumer culture. Access to mediums is often mediated by social media, while the séance itself is framed as a meaningful, repeatable and often costly experience. In this sense, the contemporary consultation with mediums reveals not only changing ways of relating to the dead, but also broader transformations in how grief, spirituality and personal crisis are organised in late modernity.

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STATEMENT ON RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT

The article is based on research data stored in the author's personal archive, which will be deposited later this year in the Social Science Data Archives (ADP – Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov; <https://www.adp.fdv.uni-lj.si/en/>), where it will be accessible, to a limited extent, for scientific and research purposes only.

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ZAKAJ LJUDJE POIŠČEJO MEDIJE: MOTIVACIJE IN UTELEŠENA IZKUŠNJA MED KLIENTI PRAKSE TRINOŽNEGA STOLČKA NA MADŽARSKEM

Prispevek na podlagi etnografskega terenskega raziskovanja obravnava malo poznano obliko sodobnega medijstva na Madžarskem, t. i. tehniko trinožnega stolčka. Raziskava se osredotoča na izvajalce te metode in njihove kliente, ki so se z njo seznanili bodisi prek Antala Bujke bodisi prek tradicije, povezane z njegovim delovanjem. Na podlagi intervjujev, opazovanja z udeležbo in neposrednih izkušenj s seansami članek raziskuje življenjske okoliščine in motive, ki ljudi vodijo k iskanju stika z mediji, ter načine, kako medijske seanse prispevajo k osmišljanju smrti, izgube in negotovosti.

Prispevek predstavi delovanje tehnike trinožnega stolčka in jo umesti v širši zgodovinski ter primerjalni okvir. Po svoji strukturi je metoda podobna različnim oblikam pisanja s posredovanjem predmetov, ki so bile povezane s spiritualizmom

19. stoletja, kar omogoča primerjavo kljub različnim zgodovinskim in družbenim okoliščinam, v katerih se te prakse pojavljajo.

Intervjuji kažejo, da je najpomembnejši razlog za obisk medija iskanje gotovosti o obstoju posmrtnega življenja ter želja po ohranjanju odnosa z umrlimi bližnjimi. Pomemben delež sodelujočih se je na medije obrnil po izkušnji izgube, zlasti po nenadnih, tragičnih ali drugače težko sprejemljivih smrtih. V tem kontekstu medijska komunikacija ne zagotavlja le tolažbe, temveč tudi interpretativni okvir, znotraj katerega smrt ni razumljena kot dokončni konec, temveč kot preobrazba trajajočega odnosa. Raziskava kaže, da je za številne kliente posebej pomembna izkustvena gotovost, ki pogosto predhodi verovanju in ga tudi oblikuje.

Hkrati raziskava pokaže, da obiskovanje medijev ni omejeno zgolj na soočanje z žalovanjem. Odnosi z mrtvimi delujejo tudi kot vir podpore v vsakdanjem življenju. Klienti pogosto iščejo nasvete glede zdravja, družinskih odnosov, vprašanj, povezanih z delovnim okoljem, ter pomembnih življenjskih odločitev. Medijske seanse tako postanejo del dolgotrajnega odnosa, v katerem umrli prevzemajo vlogo podpornikov in svetovalcev.

Ena izmed pomembnih ugotovitev raziskave je, da medijski odnosi niso organizirani zgolj okoli potreb živih. Pripovedi sodelujočih pogosto izražajo prepričanje, da lahko pomoč potrebujejo tudi mrtvi sami, na primer kadar naj bi bili ujeti v vmesnem stanju ali kadar njihov napredek ovirajo nerazrešeni zemeljski odnosi. V takšnih primerih seanse postanejo sredstvo zdravljenja, sprave in prehoda ne le za žive, temveč tudi za mrtve.

Prispevek posebno pozornost namenja tudi telesnim in čutnim razsežnostim medijske izkušnje. Ena od značilnosti tehnike trinožnega stolčka je, da komunikacija postane zaznavna prek pisanja, gibanja in dotika. Po pripovedih sodelujočih so med najpomembnejšimi vidiki seans prav telesne izkušnje, prek katerih prisotnost umrlih postane neposredno občutena. Ob opiranju na teorijo utelešenja Thomasa Csordasa članek zagovarja stališče, da medijska gotovost temelji manj na kognitivnem prepričanju ali doktrinarni veri kot na izkušnjah, posredovanih skozi telo.

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